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SUBJECT: CSTO RAPID REACTION FORCE BECOMING A REALITY

REF: Moscow 281

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Leaders of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) will gather in Moscow on June 14 to create a Moscow-based CSTO rapid reaction force (KSOR). MFA officials and experts agree that Russia's principal motivation for creating KSOR is to counter a possible northern influx of terrorists across Russia's porous southern border should the U.S. be defeated in or prematurely withdraw from Afghanistan. They contend CSTO partners support creating KSOR with the understanding that Russia will not only be responsible for the majority of materiel and expenditures, but also provide the diplomatic support should international opposition to KSOR arise. While KSOR represents an assertion of Russia's influence in Central Asia, Russian MFA officials are quick to clarify that KSOR poses no threat to NATO or U.S. interests. In practice, significant political-military hurdles constrain the force's consolidation. End Summary.

The CSTO Rapid Reaction Force (KSOR)

¶2. (SBU) Leaders of CSTO member states will meet in Moscow on June 14 to officially create a CSTO collective rapid reaction force (KSOR) (reftel). The agreements to be signed will include the creation of KSOR, the creation of a Moscow-based multi-national force command (details of its structure and decision-making process are still being discussed), and details on where KSOR troops will come from, how they will be deployed, and what weapons they will use.

¶3. (SBU) CSTO SYG Nikolay Bordyuzha stated that KSOR will include 10,000-20,000 elite, rapidly-deployable soldiers. The core of KSOR will be based on the already existing CSTO Collective Rapid Deployment Forces (KSBR). Unlike this ad-hoc arrangement, the larger KSOR will be a standing force with a permanent command structure. To be able to act effectively on an inter-operable basis, it is expected that the military units put forth by CSTO member countries for KSOR have compatible armaments, technology and means of communication.

¶4. (SBU) Russia is shouldering the bulk of military materiel and political capital needed for creating KSOR. KSOR will be largely composed of Russian troops: Russia intends to contribute an airborne division and a land assault brigade (approx. 8,000 soldiers). Kazakhstan plans to contribute a land assault brigade (approx. 4,000 soldiers), while the remaining CSTO states plan to limit their contributions to the battalion-level. Local press argue that CSTO partners support Russia's creation of KSOR with the understanding that Russia will both be responsible for the military materiel and expenditures for KSOR and provide the diplomatic support should international opposition to KSOR arise.

¶5. (SBU) A permanent KSOR command structure will be based in Moscow. The day-to-day decisions of KSOR's development and coordination

will fall to CSTO's joint staff. Deploying KSOR troops will require a consensus-based decision among the leaders of CSTO Members, and will require a resolution from the CSTO's Collective Security Council (SKB). Russian experts speculate, however, that KSOR's consensus-based decision-making process may render KSOR ineffective in the face of crises. The Commander of a KSOR operation will be chosen on a case by case basis, and will most likely come from the country in which the operation is carried out, as it is expected that the Commander will be more familiar with the country and crisis context. Some states had to pass laws to allow the armed troops of other CSTO member states onto their soil.

Preparing for U.S. Failure in Afghanistan

¶16. (SBU) MFA officials argue that Russia's principal motivation for creating KSOR is countering terrorism and extremism in Central Asia. They said Russia needs to be prepared to stop a potential northern influx of terrorists and extremists from Afghanistan in case the U.S. withdraws prematurely. Experts added that the GOR fears that U.S. failure in Afghanistan could spread instability to Central Asia's corrupt, authoritarian regimes. This could cause an influx of refugees and terrorists across Russia's porous southern border.

KSOR: A Russian-Led Endeavor

¶17. (SBU) According to some local press, Moscow's objective with KSOR is the creation of a Russia-centric military force comparable to

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NATO. Russia envisions KSOR being able to cover all regions of strategic interest to Russia by building off existing contingents, where possible: a pentagonal group including Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan covering Central Asia; an existing Russian-Belarusian joint military contingent within the CSTO framework that covers Europe; and an existing Russian-Armenian joint contingent within the CSTO framework that covers the Trans-Caucasus.

With Central Asian Caveats

¶18. (SBU) While official Russian announcements imply that momentum is building behind KSOR, the lack of Central Asian enthusiasm for the project is evident. Uzbekistan reiterated on June 4 that it will participate in KSOR operations on an ad hoc basis and further stipulated that Uzbekistan does not accept the KSOR provision requiring that all special services, including emergency services, be part of KSOR.

Comment

¶19. (SBU) CSTO consultations on the creation of KSOR began long ago; though penning its creation will give it political impetus, in practice, KSOR is a long-term project that could still prove still-born. It remains to be seen how the archaic, bureaucratic and corrupt militaries of CSTO states will coalesce to create KSOR.

Biographic Note

¶10. (SBU) The CSTO Secretary General is Nikolay Nikolayevich Bordyuzha, a former Russian Colonel General. Born in 1949 in Oryol (south-western Russia), Bordyuzha graduated from the Perm Military School of the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces in 1972. Between 1989 and 1991 he attended KGB intelligence courses in Novosibirsk and was head of KGB human resources. Bordyuzha later served as First Deputy

Chief and later Chief of Russia's Federal Border-Guard Service (1992-1998). In 1998 he was appointed Secretary of the Russian Security Council and also Chief of the Russian presidential administration. During this time he was considered by some analysts as a possible successor to former President Boris Yeltsin. In 1999 he was appointed Russian Ambassador to Denmark. In April 2003 Bordyuzha was appointed Secretary General of the CSTO.

BEYRLE